



**Frederick County
Government
Frederick, Maryland**

News Release

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FREDERICK COUNTY APPROVES ENGLISH AS OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

FREDERICK, MD -- The Frederick Board of County Commissioners last night approved an ordinance that authorizes English as the official, primary and common language in Frederick County, Maryland. The board and officials of Frederick County Government will take all steps necessary to ensure that the role of English is preserved and enhanced in the county.

The ordinance states: “The use of a common language removes barriers of misunderstanding and helps to unify the people of Frederick County, the state and the United States, and helps to enable the full economic and civic participation of all its citizens, regardless of national origin, creed, race or other characteristics, and thus a compelling governmental interest exists in promoting, preserving and strengthening the use of the English language.”

The board will promote proficiency in English by using the language in official actions and activities and reduce costs by using English.

According to the ordinance, all official actions in the county must be in English, but exceptions allow for the use of a language other than English such as teaching another language, public health and safety policies and complying with the Native American Languages Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Act, the Voting Rights Act and other laws.

Board President Blaine Young said, “Frederick County officials encourage other Maryland counties and the state to take action on this matter and to also proclaim English as the official language. The ordinance simply would provide that for the government to act officially, it must communicate in English. Our formal and official language of record is English and no one would have the right to demand government services in any other language, unless it met a critical public need. This action is not intended to be divisive or controversial, but it is merely meant to recognize our long and shared history in this country, and honor those who came before us.”

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Frederick County Approves English as Official Language – Page Two

To date, 31 of the 50 states have established English as the official language. Maryland is not yet one of the 31 states. Frederick County is the first county in Maryland to approve English as the official language.

The commissioners emphasized that establishing English as the official language does not mean “English only.” The ordinance would allow the county to publish advisories using other languages when there is a need to do so, such as for the protection of public health and safety, assuring equality before the law, promoting tourism, teaching foreign languages, law enforcement, and other legitimate situations.

For additional information, contact Frederick County Attorney John Mathias at 301-600-1030 or via e-mail at jmathias@FrederickCountyMD.gov.

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